




**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT  
FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS**

**ROADBLOCKS**

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# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS

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# Professional Development Toolkit for New and Beginning Teachers



The PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS is a research-based video streamed program with accompanying resource documents. The program is an outgrowth of a previous Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) online mentoring study at Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings of the online mentoring study revealed twelve topics new and beginning teachers felt additional university training would have led them to more effective use of best practices in the classroom. In this program, each of the twelve topics is presented in two to six stand alone video segments. The total number of segments is forty five. Suggested uses, in addition to personal viewing by K-12 teachers for self improvement, include professional development, mentor and mentee, university prospective teacher, and small or large group training.

The facilitators are university faculty and practitioners with field experience. Each is currently involved in teacher training or serves as a staff development administrator. All are currently engaged in educational research, teaching and/or educational policy development.

The teachers in the video programs are classroom teachers. Some of them were participants in the 2006 Online Mentoring Study in which the topics for this project were identified. They represent all disciplines in K-12 grades.

Resource documents for the programs are provided as PDF files to facilitate the use of the 45 video segments. The first set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) an introduction to program facilitators, including a definition of each topic, and a list of the video segments, and (3) a research formative study summary that helped to guide the project's development. The second set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) a full text transcript for each video segment, (3) a set of problems and solutions related to each video segment in the form of a work-study guide, and (4) an annotated bibliographic summary of references and Internet links for each transcript. Many of the organizations and agencies referenced in the transcripts are actively involved in the development of video and professional development presentations that support policy and advocacy.

Every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information. Internet content, however, does appear, disappear and change over time. CEPI, as a university-based educational policy research institute endorses no specific position of any listed group.

# ROADBLOCKS

## SEGMENT #1: INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A ROADBLOCK?

### VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT

**Roadblocks:** Battlefield barriers (perceived or real) that inhibit success. Barriers may relate to professionalism, ethics, and personal growth.

**Facilitator:** Dr. [Joan Rhodes](#), Assistant Professor  
Department of Teaching and Learning  
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AUDIO	VIDEO
<p>Roadblocks to success can occur in any work environment including teaching. Roadblocks can be perceived or real. In either case, they inhibit our success and are barriers to our professional growth.</p> <p>My name is Joan Rhodes. I am a professor in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Today I would like to share some ideas for turning roadblocks into positive learning experiences. In this segment, we will specifically talk about challenging situations that can be perceived as roadblocks and inhibit our classroom performance.</p> <p>Often there is no system in place for new teachers to work through their problems in school settings. New teachers may feel isolated without a process for sharing and venting about issues that impact their work in the classroom. Sometimes the work environment itself can serve as an inhibitor to successful teaching experiences.</p> <p>Have you experienced challenges with the political aspects of education, the organizational structures that define authority relationships, or even something simple like the distance you must travel to use a telephone in the building? Each of these perceived or real barriers slows progress. How can you eliminate these and other roadblocks from your work environment?</p> <p>First, you need to recognize that you can not change everything at once. Focus on one roadblock at a time. Create some distance between yourself and the roadblock so you can think about it objectively. In their book, <i>Group Processes in the Classroom</i>, Richard and Patricia Schmuck suggest the following steps for group problem solving that can be applied to dealing with roadblocks:</p>	<p>DR. RHODES</p>

## **1. Specify the problem**

A roadblock exists because there is a discrepancy between something we value and the actual reality. We are unsettled by the difference between what ought to be and what is. Our first step to solving a problem is to specifically state the situation and what we see as the target. For example, I can not get to a private phone to talk to parents about their children may be a problem that you are confronting in your work environment. You might state the target as: I would like to have a private location to use a phone during my planning period.

## **2. Analyze the problem**

Determine all of the forces that are keeping you from moving closer to the target. List the targets in order of their importance. For instance, although you may want privacy for making phone calls, the phone jack may be permanently located in the teacher's break room where everyone eats lunch during your planning period. The physical location of the jack and the need for a space to eat lunch are hindering your ability to talk with parents.

## **3. Generate multiple solutions**

Determine ways that the forces keeping you from the target may be reduced. Reducing the hindering forces may be more efficient than trying to intensify helping forces. In our example, you might be able to request the phone be moved to an alternative location. You might be able to request use of a phone in the counselor's or principal's office. Multiple solutions help you move closer to eliminating the roadblock.

## **4. Design plans for action**

Make a specific plan to address the barrier. Enlist the help of anyone who will help implement your plan. Can you determine who in our example should be contacted? (slight pause) If you selected the building administrator, counselor, and colleagues, you are well on your way to securing support for your plan.

## **5. Forecast the consequences of the intended action**

Developing a plan of action also requires us to imagine the possible consequences of our action. Asking for feedback prior to implementing your plan can assist you in making meaningful revisions to ensure success. Can you imagine what might happen if we attempted to solve the telephone problem by announcing to our colleagues in the break room during lunch that everyone needed to be absolutely silent so a phone call could be

made? This approach could have very negative consequences and certainly would not protect the privacy of the student being discussed.

## 6. Take action

Once you feel comfortable that your plan may succeed, put it into action. After the first step, revise the plan as necessary.

## 7. Evaluate the action

Following implementation of your plan of action, take some time to reflect on the changes that have occurred as a result of your action. Perhaps the building administrator now realizes the importance of a private location for talking with parents. Also consider how you have interacted with your colleagues. If your roadblock is still in place, begin the process again. This cycle has the potential to make the barrier less problematic over time.

Let's hear from a teacher about how she identified and developed a plan of action for solving issues that are roadblocks to her instruction. As you watch each clip, think about how the actions taken by the teacher are related to the problem solving process (Specify the problem, analyze the problem, generate multiple solutions, design plans for action, forecast consequences, take action and evaluate action).

My name is Andrea Prisco. I was in the classroom for eight years and for the past three years I have been a resource teacher. When I was a first year teacher, most of my time was spent grading papers and writing lesson plans. However, when I wrote lesson plans I did not adapt them to my student's strengths and weaknesses.

I followed my pacing guides and trudged through the curriculum, never deviating, for fear of not following the rules. By the end of April we started to review, I began to realize my students had not necessarily mastered some of the content.

Even though it was late in the school year, I quickly created an end of year assessment in each subject area. Once the tests were administered, I scored each test and noted areas of weakness. As I created lesson plans to review material, I focused on SOL's and strands that required more reinforcement and practice. For the entire month of May, I continued with this process. The final week before the SOL tests, we reviewed SOL's that students had mastered just for good measure.

In the years that followed, I made a conscious effort to pre & post test throughout the year to better drive my lesson planning and instruction. Pre-testing saved time and helped me hone in on my student's weaknesses. My students' performance improved greatly.

My name is Melissa Bryant. I am a high school Marketing teacher, and am currently in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching. The biggest roadblock that I encountered my first year

ANDREA PRISCO

MELISSA BRYANT

of teaching was effectively dealing with classroom management. I entered the education field as a career switcher, so I did not have the traditional preparation that education majors have in college. During my first few weeks in the classroom,

it became overly clear that I had an issue with my student's behavior. As a result, I sat down with my department head and discussed my issues. Together we came up with the idea for me to meet with the instructional coach at our school. She was a godsend! Together the coach and I developed numerous strategies to address the problem of classroom management. We used books, the Internet, and other teachers as resources to aid in solving my problem. From the list of strategies we developed, we choose about four to be implemented in my classroom. For each of the four strategies we developed a plan of action to be used while I was teaching. We also developed an alternate list of ways to implement each strategy in case we met with adverse reactions from the students. While I implemented the chosen strategies, my coach observed my teaching. After her observations, we sat and had a conference to evaluate each strategy and its effectiveness. From the list of four strategies we choose two strategies for me to regularly use to manage student behavior in the future. I still use these strategies in my classroom today. My notes from conferences and classroom experiences have been useful as a teaching reference; and they are a positive documentation of my progress.

When educators address barriers to their instruction through thoughtful problem solving, they will usually arrive at solutions. Making use of school resources, like coaches, administrators, counselors and fellow colleagues can be highly effective for supporting the problem solving process. Taking time to reflect on the way we approach problems that occur in the work place are essential for improving the educational environment and ensuring student success.

DR. RHODES

## PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

**Roadblocks:** Battlefield barriers (perceived or real) that inhibit success. Barriers may relate to professionalism, ethics and personal growth.

### **Ask yourself:**

What factors are impacting the quality of your teaching and keeping you from celebrating your successes?

### **Suggested use for this module:**

#### **1. Analyze:**

Please select one of the scenarios below and problem-solve a list of possible solutions. Record your ideas in the space provided. Discuss these ideas with your other educators (mentor, colleagues, or other beginning teachers).

#### **2. View:**

Watch the corresponding video on this topic. How does this information change your ideas?

#### **3. Compare:**

Revisit the scenario selected. Next, review the section entitled, "Possible Solutions" comparing the ideas listed with your own list.

#### **4. Reflect:**

How will you apply this new information to your current or future classroom? What goal will you set to help you begin to change your practices? What support is needed to help you accomplish this goal?

#### **5. Apply:**

List the first step towards change below. Create a timeline for success and place deadlines in your personal planner as a reminder. How will you know when you have met your goals?

## **Scenarios 1 & 2: Roadblocks**

### **Scenario 1: Your goals collide with someone else, 'The Custodian'**

Ms. Martin is the last teacher in her building that was hired this academic year. The number of projected students was too low and her teaching position was created just a week before the start of the school year. The school administration had to search for everything that she needed for her classroom including books, materials, furniture, computers, and even a place for her to be located near the other 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Mr. McDonald is the school custodian. He has been hostile since the start

of the year when he had to relocate items that he had placed in the classrooms of other teachers. Yesterday, Ms. Martin had the students sit in cooperative groups by putting the desks into groupings to conduct an activity. At the end of the school day, the custodian stops by to inform Ms. Martin that she can no longer move the furniture in her classroom since it makes cleaning the classroom more difficult. How should she respond to Mr. McDonald?

**Scenario 2: Reflections on your values**

It is almost time for spring break! It is hard to believe how quickly this year has gone by. Although her administration and colleagues are telling her that she is doing a good job, Ms. Allen is beginning to feel like she is not making a difference with her students. She worries that they will not be prepared at the end of the academic year. As Ms. Allen glances up at the clock, she realizes that another planning time is almost over. How should she determine her success this year?

Circle the scenario that you selected below:

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Record a list of your own possible solutions here:

Summary & Goal Setting:

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Begin by asking yourself: How will your relationships with others within the school community enhance or interfere with the learning that occurs in your classroom?

Educators must develop relationships with others which have the opportunity to build or interfere with the learning process. These individuals include secretaries, custodians, coaches, psychologists, reading or math specialist, nurses, attendance officers, school board members, PTA officers, parents, business leaders, and other colleagues.

When a problem arises, stop to consider the underlying ramifications of this issue.

Determine:

1. Is the problem owned by another person? If so, do you even need to respond to the situation? How will you build positive communications with this individual?
2. Is the problem owned by you? If so, what will you do to change your own behavior to become more successful? How will you apologize or make amends for the difficulties that occurred?
3. Is the problem owned by both of you? Can you collaborate together to find a creative solution that both individuals can be happy with.

When you feel uncertain about your teaching roles, use reflection to help you overcome these barriers. Reflection will help you analyze and guide your own development and will improve your day-to-day activities.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I learning about my students?
- What am I learning about myself?
- As I look back over my teaching today, what makes me most proud and what makes me feel embarrassed?
- If I could teach this again, what would I change and why?

Self-reflection and reflecting with other educators will enable you to solve problems, question assumptions, and improve your practices. Sometimes teachers get so bogged down with the stuff (reports, student needs, administrative demands, parental requests, curriculum meetings, standards, and assessments) that they lose sight of what will make the most difference in the classroom. Exemplary educators must focus on building student success and improving the quality of instruction in the classroom.

Recall three or four of your favorite teachers. Make a list of the characteristics that you remember about them. How can you incorporate these skills into your own classroom?

## ANNOTATED RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ❖ There often is no system in place for new teachers to share, vent, or cut through a feeling isolation in the classroom.

*A better beginning: helping new teachers survive and thrive.* (2002). Retrieved October 15, 2007, from  
<http://www.ask.com/bar?q=A+better+beginning%3A+helping+new+teachers+survive+and+thrive&page=1&qsrc=0&ab=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fapeonline.org%2FNEA-Teacher-Quality-A-Better-Beginning-Helping-new-teachers-survive-and-thrive.htm>

- ❖ Working environments may also serve as inhibitors to successful teaching experiences. Inhibitors include:
  - Physical features of buildings, equipment, and resources, which serve as a platform for teachers' work.
  - Organizational structures that define teachers' formal positions and relationships with others in the school, such as lines of authority, workload, autonomy, and supervisory arrangements
  - The sociological features that shape how teachers experience their work, including their roles, status, and the characteristics of their students and peers
  - The political features of their organization, such as whether teachers have opportunities to participate in important decisions
  - The cultural features of the school as a workplace that influence teachers' interpretation of what they do and their commitments, such as values, traditions, and norms
  - The psychological features of the environment that may sustain or deplete teachers personally, such as the meaningfulness of what they do day to day or the opportunities they find for learning and growth
  - The educational features, such as curriculum and testing policies, that may enhance or constrain what teachers can teach

Johnson, Susan Moore. (2006). *Workplace matters: teacher quality, retention, and effectiveness.* (ERIC Document Retrieval Service No. Ed 495822)

- ❖ An effective new teacher support system is:
  - Designed, established, and funded at the district level
  - Overseen by a committee
  - Available to all new teachers,
  - Mentor-based
  - Introduced with new teacher orientation
  - Mindful of new teacher assignments
  - Supportive of collaborative learning
  - Sensitive to a new teacher's basic needs
  - Rich with professional development opportunities
  - Helpful to school administrators

*A better beginning: helping new teachers survive and thrive.* (2002). Retrieved from October 15, 2007, <http://www.ask.com/bar?q=A+better+beginning%3A+helping+new+teachers+survive+and+thrive&>

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